

CANFIELD

The Azores as a Health Resort

By

HERMAN CANFIELD, A. M., M. D.



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HORTA, CAPITAL OF FAYAL, WITH PICO ACROSS THE BAY.

THE AZORES AS A HEALTH RESORT.

BY

HERMAN CANFIELD, A. M., M. D.,

Hopeworth Sanitarium, - - Bristol, R. I.

At this time of the year the question will not fail to be asked by some of your patients, "Where can I go for the winter months?" If means are abundant, they can go where they choose, and will usually omit to ask your advice, following the bent of their own pleasure. The majority of people, however, must consult their pocket-books as well as health, and I shall take a small portion of your time in the description of a health resort equally adapted to those who must be economical, and others to whom expense is no consideration.

About twenty-one hundred miles to the eastward in the same latitude with Philadelphia, lies a group of islands, nine in number, called the Azores, or Western Islands; by name, beginning with the most westerly, Corvo, Flores, Fayal, San Jorge, Graciosa, Pico, Terceira, San Miguel, and Santa Maria. Of these San Miguel is the largest and contains the village of Furnas, where the hot springs are found, of which I shall speak in detail later.

Corvo is a picturesque mass of rock and forest, almost round, not over five miles in diameter, inhabited by a most gentle and hospitable people, called

"old fashioned" by the other islanders. It has no harbor, and the only means of communication with the outside world is by means of a whale-boat from Flores once a month, if the weather permits.

Flores has gained nothing and lost much by its contact with the outer world. Most of the men here have been whalers and can speak English; the others have been to California or are going thither. The women are pretty, the market for children overstocked; the oranges are delicious, the scenery tame, though very pretty; but upon the whole, Flores is a good place to get away from, and if you send your patients there, do so when they cannot stay long.

Graciosa is well worthy of its name; its people are extremely intelligent, but "old fashioned," like those of Corvo. The best and fastest donkeys are grown here; but if your patients are not interested in the breeding of that animal, let them keep to the steamer and go on to San Jorge. Upon second thought I would not advise them to stay even there, unless they want a few days of rough tramping over the wild hills. This island seems like a range of mountain tops thrust five or six hundred feet above the water. The fruits are fine, but the land is mainly used for the raising of cattle and sheep.

At Fayal your patient will want to stop over one steamer at least. Horta is the harbor of the island, situated on the shore of a beautiful bay, with the high hills Ponta da Gaia and Ponta da Espalmanca on opposite sides. The Hotel Fayal, near the landing and opposite the old fort where the famous cannon "Long Tom" is mounted, is well kept, and the proprietor most obliging. The Central House, the only other hotel, is cheaper and fairly comfortable.



PEASANT IN "CARAPUÇA," WITH AZOREAN HOE.



WOMEN IN "CAPOTES."

This island boasts several physicians, the others thus far mentioned having none, with the exception of Flores, where the old Scotchman, who is consul for nineteen nations, also dispenses physic to the great gratification of the sole undertaker of the island.

Horta possesses a number of fine gardens; the walks and donkey excursions are numerous, and take one to many most delightful spots, both inland and along the shore, which for the most part is wild and extremely wierd. At Capellas, twelve miles distant, are valuable iron and sulphur springs, but, unfortunately, they are covered by the sea at high tide. In the summer, however, when the tides are low, many people camp out and lodge near by to drink the waters. Nine miles from Horta lies the Caldeira, the crater of an extinct volcano, ten miles in circumference. One may go down its almost perpendicular sides in half an hour, but the return climb of 1,600 feet takes two hours at least. The view from the edge is magnificent, and the centre of the crater is occupied by a shallow lake whose bottom is covered with mosses of different color. When no breeze ruffles its surface the effect is something like a crazy quilt under crystal. The roads here are most excellent; carriages are to be had at a low figure, but donkeys, with the comfortable Azorean saddle, are much to be preferred.

To any one interested in deformities, all these islands offer grand opportunities for study, but especially this. The people not only glory in the mistakes of nature, but use them as a lively means of trade. At two cents apiece they will slip around any corner and strip to the skin, that the deformity may be seen in all the details of its filth and hideousness. Let

me warn you, however, that any suggestions on your part to bring about a cure will meet with haughty disdain, worthy of the proudest monarch. After your patients have enjoyed the scenery, the gardens and the quaint ways of the people, they have done the island. This takes about two weeks. After that time, as I was informed by the proprietor of the Fayal Hotel, visitors usually get drunk. This recreation has, however, the advantage of being indulged in here with great economy. Aqua ardente, a poor sweet potato alcohol, for the most part, can be had, even at the dry goods stores, at two cents a glass. Five glasses produce to perfection the desired effect, which lasts twenty-four hours, and not much of a "head" either.

From Fayal to Pico, five miles across the bay, one lands at Magdalena, a pretty little town, like all the rest in the islands, but cleaner. The village boasts a very good inn, but with accommodations for only half a dozen guests.

This island of Pico is largely made up of a mountain, whose snow-capped peak glistens in the winter sunlight at a height of about 6,000 feet, and at whose foot a perpendicular face of rock runs 16,000 feet straight down to the bottom of the sea. Some of your patients may like diving off a spring-board. No danger of striking their heads here! The making of wine from the vines which spread over every cultivable foot of ground and rock, and the raising of cattle are the principal occupations of these people. They are a tall, well-built race, both men and women being handsome, with a graceful carriage indicative of great strength and suppleness. They are extremely polite and kindly, and though one may not

understand their language, he cannot fail to enjoy being with them. There has never been a resident physician here. The people are the perfect embodiment of health, and cannot help influencing for good the weakly ones who go among them. Of course the mountain is the principal attraction, but in winter it is difficult of ascent, owing to the heavy coating of sleet and ice upon its peak. Snow never falls, but a kind of sleet or hail. If you once reach the top, however, you may warm your hands over the crater, whence escape gases and heat, though there has been no sign of activity for years; those old people who claim to have ever seen smoke issuing from the crater are looked upon as beings of imaginative sight. A donkey carries you almost to the top of the mountain, after which there is a tedious scramble, over shoe in loose cinders, making a famous dry scrub. But go to the top by all means, if possible. The view on a clear, dry day will amply reward you, though you should be footsore for days, and spend your nights finding the soft spots in your corn husk mattress. If you want a fine servant for the rest of your days, bring home a Pico boy.

Angra, on the island of Terceira, is the capital city of the islands, and, in the height of its glory, possessed the government university, hospital, and medical school, besides being the birthplace of Azorean aristocracy. Its inhabitants are a fine race, showing very plainly the Spanish blood of their ancestors. The scenery is very pretty, streams being plentiful, with some very beautiful waterfalls. Fine gardens are numberless, the roads very smooth, and the verdure reminding one of the rank growth only seen in our greenhouses, the dense forests being



SCENE IN GARDEN OF S^{RA}. ANTONIO BORGES, PONTA DEL GADA, SAN MIGUEL.

trimmed and raked like lawns. The churches and public buildings are the best in the islands, though that is saying very little. Early in the spring, bull fights are held on this island, the best of which are seen in the streets of the small villages.

At San Miguel, as the steamer rounds the break-water (which, by the way, has been under construction about thirty-five years and is not half finished yet), a semi-circular range of hills, all cone-shaped and verdure-clad, rise tier upon tier, until the distant peaks are lost among the low hanging clouds. Between them and the sea, on gently sloping ground, stretches out the largest city of the islands, Ponta del Gada. Numerous church towers with their tongueless bells, grown old and worn under the long-handled hammers of generations of sextons; a few tall factory chimneys, and then rows and rows of stone and plaster houses, great and small, all alike in design, white, yellow, or pink washed, with one here and there faced with tiles of different colors; large gardens surrounded with high walls breaking the monotony and lighting up the picture. To the left an ancient fort, fast falling into decay; to the right a modern jail, neat, trim and prosperous looking; streets so full of people that one wonders if the whole 25,000 inhabitants are not out on parade—such is the city as seen from the sea. The ship is immediately surrounded by a flotilla of clumsy boats propelled by long sweeps, each having a cannon ball sunk into the inner extremity, balancing the oar and utilizing the ancient ammunition of the fort, while the boatmen expend all their strength in adding to a confusion of tongues such as puts Babel into the shade. We jump into the nearest boat, and quickly

gliding behind a wall, find ourselves at the landing of the custom house, a quaint old stone building of Venetian architecture, among whose massive columns loafs half the male population of the city, smoking cigarettes and discussing the late political news brought in by the ship. It is said that all able-bodied men upon the island are either farmers or custom-house officers. I can well believe it, as there was certainly an officer present for every article I had in my trunk. The examination was short, but then the fun began. First, all taxable articles were appraised; then an additional tax was levied on each piece of baggage; then ten per cent. of the whole tax for one public work, six per cent. for another, through the list of all that was being done or was to be done upon the islands, and, lastly, a charge for the paper you had declared upon, rent for the pen, and a fair price for the ink you had used.

All this is done with great dignity and politeness, but you cannot escape recognizing, that back of it all, lurks the hydra-headed serpent of officialism, tightening its folds and crushing the life out of these islands under the guise of governmental red tape.

Many invalids remain in Ponta del Gada for the winter, deferring their trip to the Hot Springs to the early spring months. There are always here a number of American and English people. The Portuguese society is hospitable and entertaining. Short excursions may be made to the surrounding towns and other points of interest. The city itself has a good theatre, a large public library and museum, numbers of fine gardens, ancient churches and government buildings, public markets, etc., that afford one means of diversion. This is all well enough

in its way, but the invalid who is thoroughly in earnest about the recovery of his health, will push on to **Valle das Furnas** without delay.

Comfortable carriages, drawn by three mules abreast, make the trip over the mountains in a day, over a road built and maintained by the government. After ten days pitching about at sea, to bowl along with a smooth, compact pumice-stone macadam under wheel, is a delight indeed. Up hills and around the sides of mountains, now down into deep gorges, over bridges spanning roaring streams or rocky gullies; now touching the very sea and catching the dashing spray, then up again 2,000 feet; orange groves on every side; bananas, loquots and pine-apples; fruits of our own country and all others; strange trees and trees familiar, and shrubs, flowers, and ferns everywhere.

At last we dash down a narrow gorge and come out on the shore of the lake of the Valley of the Furnas. Along its shores, around a high hill, and we drive out upon a promontory with the village of Furnas at our feet. Away to the right clouds of steam hover over the site of the hot springs; below us runs the Ribeira Quente, the hot river, glinting yellow gold in the sunlight, with its heavily charged iron and sulphur waters, flooding the fields of broad-leaved inhamas, lost to sight under old mills, then out again among the trees and plantations of stramonium—for a distance of two miles, trailing a thin veil of steam over its waters. Below, the quaint village; and beyond the towering peaks of Catahote, Vara, etc., 3,500 feet into the sky.

Accommodations at Furnas are very comfortable, but by no means luxurious. The food is good, but



RIBEIRA QUENTE, VALLE DAS FURNAS.

not varied—mostly meats. I have eaten a twelve course dinner, at a Portuguese table, and had only one vegetable—boiled potatoes. Chickens, eggs, milk, and all kinds of fruit can be had in abundance.

You will not meet here the difficulty one finds in sending invalids to the Southern States, for the diet question need not be taken into consideration. Water is always good and pure, being conducted in earthen pipes from mountain streams. Wine is good and cheap. The drainage is all natural, and there are seldom closets in the houses.

The springs and the town itself lie in a bowl-shaped valley, the crater of an extinct volcano, or rather a series of volcanoes. Not many feet below the surface the fires are still active, and the springs are simply streams of water heated by the hot gases seeking escape from below through their channels. These superheated gases, passing over beds of different mineral constituents, partake of their character, and deposit in the water they meet with, a portion of the same. Where the gases issue from the earth, free from moisture, they deposit about their exits pure sulphur and alum, for the most part. The daily flow of water from these springs is simply enormous, their drainage forming a stream twenty feet wide. The temperature of the different springs ranges from 50° to 212° Fahrenheit. . . . Most of them are heavily charged with carbonic acid gas. The degree of this varies, as does the pressure, some flowing slowly, with very little gas, while others boil fiercely on high, with a roaring of gas, heard at a long distance.

My experience with mineral waters, leads me to believe, that their therapeutic virtue depends much

more upon the way in which nature has mixed the chemical elements, than upon the elements themselves. The most provoking part of this is, that it is the manner of the mixing, that we know nothing about, while of the elements mixed we have a very fair understanding. A careful chemical analysis has been made of some twenty of the principal springs, but I will not weary you with repeating them. Briefly, some of the springs are alkaline, others strongly acid. All contain sulphur, iron, alum, and silica in varying proportions. Silica is present in some of the waters in surprisingly large quantities, imparting to them a smooth, oily feeling, which renders a bath in them most delightful. Others produce a sharp, stinging sensation, due to the excess of carbonic acid gas; while others draw and pucker the skin, leaving a yellow deposit that deeply stains the towels like iron rust.

The bath-houses were built by the government a few years ago, and are free to all. Besides these there are a dozen private baths, but the government has stipulated that for each one built, the owner must also build another connecting with the same spring, for the use of the public.

All bath-tubs are cut out of solid stone, marble, sandstone or lava rock. The water is run in closed pipes, from the boiling springs, into two tanks, the one a cooling tank, the other receiving a constant stream of the boiling water. The bather mingles the two to suit his pleasure.

Briefly, these waters are efficacious :

First, in rheumatism. Chronic cases, other than those of a rheumatoid arthritic type, always recover, and what is most remarkable, is the permanency of



BATH HOUSE AT VALLE DAS FURNAS,

the cure, a number of cases being reported in which there has been no relapse up to date, a period of ten years or thereabouts. If the waters can be persisted in, ordinary chronic rheumatism seems to be entirely cured. Every case improves.

Second, most cases of paralysis are benefited, especially where there is a rheumatic diathesis present.

Third, syphilitic lesions of all kinds.

Fourth, locomotor ataxia in some cases is greatly benefited, but as a rule the result is disappointing.

Fifth, the Portuguese is "damned with his stomach," of which he is always complaining. To the springs he makes his annual pilgrimage, and there finds sure relief from his dyspepsia and intestinal troubles.

Sixth, skin diseases are for the most part cured, almost always benefited, especially eczema.

Seventh, to my mind this is a perfect heaven for a neurasthenic. My own experience was a very happy one. After a long period of nervous suffering following a severe attack of la grippe, I reached the springs January 1st, a complete wreck. In the first thirty days I gained thirty-four pounds, and all the neurasthenic symptoms disappeared in proportion. On January 1st I could not walk a quarter of a mile. January 30th I walked twelve miles without discomfort.

I cannot give you much information about the internal administration of the waters. Every one drinks according to his taste, and I could obtain no directions from any physician upon the island, nor could I find any reports upon the subject. I drank of them all. Some were very nasty, some most delicious, but I could perceive no marked effect from any. Inva-



CALDEIRAS DE PEDRO BUTELMO, GRANDE, AND DIASMODEE, AT VALLE DAS FÉJAS.

lids of all classes will do well at any season of the year, except those with weak throats and lungs, and those should not be sent at all. The rheumatics will do better in the summer. . . .

The cases likely to be benefited upon any of the islands, and especially at Furnas, are those suffering from neurasthenia in all its phases, dyspepsia, and nervous diseases of all kinds, rheumatism, skin diseases, syphilitic and otherwise, and Bright's disease in all its forms.

One word of caution: Do not send a patient alone unless he is full of resources for his own employment and pleasure. There is nothing to interest any one after the novelty of the strange country has worn off except the beautiful scenery, the lovely drives and walks. Nature has dealt with the islands with a lavish hand, giving them a climate in which every tree, fruit, flower or vegetable can be grown. She has given them mountains of great height, and plains stretching as far as the eye can reach, covered with a vegetable growth that ever produces wonder and surprise. To a lover of nature these islands are a never ending source of delight, but there is little to interest one who is not. It is a bad place for an inebriate; or, for one who craves excitement and society. A despondent patient here without a friend would commit suicide in a week. One dependent upon luxuries would be badly off, for most of the life is like camping out.

There are several ways of reaching the islands: By the Insular Navigation Company's steamers from New York, Falck & Co., Broadway, agents; barks sailing irregularly from Boston. The expense of the trip is very small. Three hundred dollars will

cover all expenses of the passage there and return, and a sojourn of three months. Five hundred dollars will allow one to do it "like a lord."

A sea voyage of twenty days over a southerly course, where the weather is usually warm and the sea smooth, a country full of novelty and interest both as regards its people, their customs, mode of living, etc., its geological history, its wonders of forest, fruit and vegetable growth, its moist, warm climate, with an average winter temperature of 62° F., and a summer temperature of 72° F., its soft ocean breezes, lulling to rest the weary brain and soothing worn out nerves, and yet by the force of their extreme purity putting life, strength and energy into every part of the body; its sunshine and diurnal equability, so grateful to the rheumatic and essential to all sufferers from kidney troubles, certainly make it worthy of our study and consideration, and afford me with a sufficient excuse for taxing, as I have, your patience by the length of this paper. And yet I have left many important points untouched, and at the best have only directed your attention to a few of the numerous advantages these islands offer to the invalid, and especially the invalid of moderate means. The time is not far distant when a more scientific knowledge of these islands will be available to the profession, when the means of communication will be improved, and the accommodations there more Americanized; the Azores will then take a high rank among the health resorts of the world.

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